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ABSTRACT

This report reviews six recently published books on the education of urban and minority youth, and the social and cultural environment in which they live. "The Homeless in Contemporary Society" (edited by R. D. Bingham, R. E. Green, and S. B. White), is a primer on homelessness in America. "Gender Influences in Classroom Interaction" (edited by L. C. Wilkinson and C. B. Marrett) consists of 11 conference papers that discuss the ways that gender-related differences are manifested in school. "Effective Education: A Minority Policy Perspective" (C. V. Willie) presents a case for maintaining the integrity of black culture throughout a student's educational experience. "Class, Race, & Gender in American Education" (edited by L. Weis) consists of 13 essays that address the ways schools foster inequalities based on students' sex, race, and class. "Toward Black Undergraduate Student Equality in American Higher Education" (edited by M. T. Nettles) consists of a collection of essays that document the barriers that black college-bound students must overcome, and makes recommendations for educational reform, government policy, and private agency programs that can reduce these obstacles. "Policies for America's Public Schools: Teachers, Equity & Indicators" (edited by R. Haskins and D. MacRae) consists of nine papers that cover the three education areas that the editors believe are most in need of reform: (1) teachers and teaching; (2) diversity and equity; and (3) the uses of information and educational indicators. (FMW)

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RECENT LITERATURE ON URBAN AND MINORITY EDUCATION

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RECENT LITERATURE ON URBAN AND MINORITY EDUCATION

The following six books, among those received by ERIC/CUE, are a cross section of recently published materials that cover key issues in our field: the education of urban and minority youth, and the social and cultural environment in which they live. They were chosen not only because they are important contributions to the subject literature, but because they are not likely to be widely promoted elsewhere.

The Homeless in Contemporary Society, edited by Richard D. Bingham, Roy E. Green, & Sammis B. White. Sage Publications: 1987. 276 pp.

This book is a primer on homelessness in America. Its 15 chapters, each written by a different specialist in the field, provide information on the history of homelessness; the current homeless populations (including, of course, families with school-age children); federal and state government, and private agency, efforts to provide housing; and the overall national housing situation. Contradictory points of view are expressed; differences focus on where responsibility for solving the problem should be placed.

June Koch, who provides an overview of the federal role in alleviating homelessness, cites programs that represent the Reagan Administration's commitment to local control. Other chapters identify inadequacies of this approach; for example, Michael Carliner urges federal tax abatement as a primary means of securing low income housing development. New York State Governor Mario Cuomo goes even further by asserting that the states have created the most innovative housing programs and that the federal government has done almost nothing.

Several chapters describe successful programs around the country, and one even presents a Third World model as a project to replicate. These programs—in New York, Portland, and Los Angeles—though too small to have a significant effect on the homelessness problem nationwide, demonstrate that solutions can be found if efforts and funds are marshalled constructively.

Gender Influences in Classroom Interaction, edited by Louis Cherry Wilkinson & Cora B. Marrett. Academic Press, Inc.: 1985. 278 pp.

Research has identified important gender related differences in student classroom performance and achievement, but the reasons for these differences are yet to be fully explored. The 11 papers in this collection, first presented at a conference held at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, focus on the reasons; they review existing research, discuss the author's experiences, and suggest fertile areas for new research. While researchers are this book's primary audience, practitioners will also find useful information in it.

In the area of student-teacher interaction, the essays concur that teachers treat male and female students differently; they usually give males more attention and have higher expectations for them. There is disagreement, however, on whether all students should be treated alike; some authors believe that equity demands that teachers tailor their approaches to the different needs of each sex to help counteract negative social conditioning received outside the classroom. Of particular interest to urban educators is Linda Grant's essay on unequal treatment of minorities by teachers. She found that in sampled first grade classes black males were more likely to be reprimanded than were white males or black or white females.

Several essays make the point that teachers react to the different behavior patterns of males and females—patterns whose origin is a currently much-debated issue. Thus, they perpetuate unequal treatment the students receive elsewhere.

Combined, all the essays offer thorough coverage of the ways that gender-related differences are manifested in school. Those that make recommendations for future research urge that both the consequences of changes in society on classroom processes and the effects of changes in the classroom on society in general be considered.

Effective Education: A Minority Policy Perspective, by Charles Vert Willie. Greenwood Press: 1987. 140 pp.

Willie, Professor Education and Urban Studies at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, presents a case for maintaining the integrity of black culture throughout a student's educational experience, and for respecting the fact that there are many different roads to educational attainment and professional success. In this book for policy makers and social science researchers, he advocates that blacks play a major role in the educational reform movement to ensure that their chances for educational achievement are not sabotaged.

Drawing on both statistical data and anecdotal material, Willie asserts that the current educational excellence movement is once again disenfranchising the minority and disabled students who have only recently begun participating in the white-dominated system. He particularly cautions blacks to refrain from trying to fit into a mold for white students, saying that failure is inevitable. Since blacks need to be better educated than whites to achieve equally in many professions, it is particularly important for them to have every possible educational opportunity. He discusses the value to blacks of both integrated (predominantly white) and black colleges, and, while citing benefits of the former, argues that a commitment to the future of black colleges is essential to the health of the American cultural and intellectual climate.

Willie's belief that blacks must be educated in desegregated schools which also take positive account of their native qualities and special needs is the cornerstone of his general philosophy about recognizing achievement in a diversified society: until we acknowledge that there can be no single standard for measuring an

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individual's worth, true equality cannot be achieved.

Class, Race, & Gender in American Education, edited by Lois Weis. State University of New York Press: 1988. 329 pp.

The 13 essays in this collection address the ways that schools foster inequalities based on students' sex, race, and class. The essays are divided into two sections; each represents a major theory currently being researched: one, that the school structure reproduces society's general stratification, and two, that schools simply (but inappropriately) respond to the cultural value system that the students themselves impose.

A lengthy overview, by Cameron McCarthy and Michael W. Apple, discusses education incorporating students' cultural differences, and cultural reproduction in general, in American educational policy.

Of more immediate use are those essays that present research studies demonstrating inequalities in American education. Flora Ida Ortiz demonstrates the differentiated delivery of services to elementary Hispanic and non-Hispanic students: the bilingual programs are denied adequate material and personal resources, they are considered remedial, and participants are stigmatized. James Stanlaw and Alan Peshkin present a case study of a multi-ethnic high school in Northern California, demonstrating how blacks, while maintaining a distinct cultural identity, participated fully in school activities.

While these essays each cover discrete aspects of the two theories presented in the book, taken together they suggest that it is the interplay of both kinds of stratification—structural and cultural—that perpetuates inequality in schools.

Toward Black Undergraduate Student Equality in American Higher Education, edited by Michael T. Nettles. Greenwood Press: 1988. 217 pp.

The road to a college degree has long been a bumpy one for black students who must compete for admission with better prepared whites, create a tuition package from scholarships and loans, and overcome bias. This collection of essays documents these hurdles and makes recommendations for educational reform, government policy, and private agency programs that can reduce these obstacles.

Several essays compare the educational and social experiences of black students attending predominantly white universities with those attending black universities. Jomills Henry Braddock, II, and James M. McPartland take a more unique approach; they review the cost and benefit considerations of attending black or predominantly white colleges over time. In a longitudinal study, they found that black males may take longer to receive a degree at predominantly white colleges, and, thus, incur more costs initially, but ultimately they will earn more than their counterparts at black colleges.

In this essay, Willie Pearson, Jr., offers statistics on the small percentage of blacks with careers in science, and cites the particular difficulties faced by those who want a science education. He urges predominantly white universities offering science programs to make special minority recruitment efforts, and black universities to enter into collaborations that will provide them with up-to-date science laboratory equipment.

In a summary chapter, A. Robert Thoeny offers specific recommendations for the public and private sectors that will help redress a long history of inequity. He further calls on black families to stress academic achievement and to create an environment where children can study and learn.

Policies for America's Public Schools: Teachers, Equity & Indicators, edited by Ron Haskins and Duncan MacRae. Ablex Publishing Corporation: 1988. 303 pp.

The nine papers that comprise this volume cover the three education areas that the editors believe are most in need of reform: teachers and teaching, diversity and equity, and uses of information and educational indicators. The papers were originally prepared for a colloquium series on "Public Education Policy for the 1990s" at the University of North Carolina. An introductory chapter reviews recent reform efforts and suggests a wide range of additional areas in need of reform. A summary chapter discusses and expands on the recommendations made in the papers.

Urban educators will find the papers addressing the issue of equity most relevant, although the problems of how to prepare and retain urban teachers is alluded to in the three papers covering teacher training, evaluation, and compensation.

In one essay, Joyce Epstein argues that schools should provide failing students with rapid remediation rather than assign them to a lower track or retain them. She offers an example of such a successful remedial program that involved peer teaching, based on her work at Johns Hopkins University. John Ogbu considers cultural diversity in his paper, and contrasts immigrant and non-immigrant minorities to demonstrate how those brought to America against their will have, reasonably, attitudes toward the dominant culture less likely to promote academic achievement. He urges that schools must make special efforts to involve parents who feel alienated both from the school and from society in general.

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